

## ***The Interdisciplinary Center for Children and Youth Studies***

### **Focusing on Israel's Troubled Youth**

Of Israel's approximately 800,000 youth, tens of thousands are defined as being at risk or in a state of distress. About 25% live in poverty, while 30% are alienated – they neither study nor work. The numerous youth-related agencies dealing with this sector are in need of theoretical know-how and tools to develop effective interventional programs and train skilled counselors.

The new Interdisciplinary Center for Children and Youth Studies at TAU's Bob Shapell School of Social Work fulfills this need. Funded by ELEM— Youth in Distress, the center provides a professional academic framework for improving the lives of young people, promoting public awareness of the various issues concerning youth at risk, and advancing youth policy in Israel.

The center, headed by Prof. Yochanan Wozner, expands on the Shapell School's existing Forum for Children and Youth Affairs, established in cooperation with ELEM in 1993. The center's experts in the fields of social work, sociology, psychology and criminology provide the academic foundations for developing rehabilitation programs, training youth counselors and professional staff, and setting up databases in the field.

President of ELEM, Nava Barak, wife of former Prime Minister Ehud Barak, noted that this year saw a dramatic increase in the level of juvenile crime in Israel, with a 42% rise in drug-related crimes and 38% rise in property-related crimes. "The police define many of these as crimes of survival," she said.

In a message conveyed to the inaugural ceremony, President of ELEM International, Ann Bialkin, expressed her hope that the new center will "strengthen knowledge and contribute to the ability of Israeli society to take care of its youth."

Dr. Mike Naftali of the center, spoke on "The Really Important Things Are Not Clearly Visible: On Children and Their Suffering."

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Nava Barak and Prof. Israel Zang, TAU Vice Rector

